

No monkeying for Jeffords

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WASHINGTON — Sen. James Jeffords, I-Vt., has had it with pet dealers monkeying around.

The Senate passed a bill Tuesday introduced by Jeffords that would outlaw the transport of primates across state lines for sale as pets.

With almost 15,000 pet apes, monkeys and prosimians now in the United States, Jeffords says the increase creates a hazard for humans who could contract primate-carried diseases like the Ebola virus.

"Unfortunately, too many people see these primates as cute house pets without considering the hazards they pose," Jeffords said in a statement. "This legislation is needed to help federal agencies control and monitor these species within our borders."

But exotic pet owners are vowing to fight the legislation when it goes to the House, saying the law would unfairly trap them in their own state.

"They're going to stop you from crossing a state line with your pet," said Mark McDaniels, president of Uniting a Proactive Primate and Exotic Animal League. "I can't leave my primates at home."

McDaniels has a squirrel monkey named Mango and black-capped capuchin named Kiwi. His animals are named what they eat, he said from his home in Mississippi.

The group is paying a Capitol Hill lobbyist \$100,000 a year to block the legislation, according to Congressional Quarterly, a Hill publication.

Jeffords also sought to limit the number of violent animal attacks suffered by humans and to protect exotic species by introducing the bill, according to his spokeswoman Diane Derby. The Humane Society of the United States applauded Jeffords for his efforts.

"Wild animals belong in the wild, not in our living rooms and basements," Michael Markarian, the group's executive vice president, said in a statement.